Reviewer’s report

Title: What determines patient preferences for treating basal cell carcinoma? A discrete choice experiment survey from the SINS trial (surgery vs imiquimod)

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Reviewer: Esther de Vries

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What determines patient preferences for treating basal cell carcinoma? A discrete choice experiment survey from the SINS trial (surgery vs imiquimod)

This is a very elegantly performed experiment aimed at determining what influences patient preferences for surgery vs imiquimod for BCC treatment.

In my view, the main findings of the paper are that patients have a preference for imiquimod and that cosmetic outcomes seemed most important in determining choice amongst those with BCC-treatment experience, whereas side effects were most important in the whole group.

The authors chose to use a Discrete Choice Experiment, which was very well suited to their objectives, and could be perfectly performed within their trial settings.

The paper is well written and analysed and I only have a few minor comments/questions:

1. The title does not seem to fully cover the content of the paper. The title suggests that the reader will get an answer to the question what are determinants of patients for treating BCC in general. The DCE only partly answers this question, only for the choice between surgery and imiquimod and of course only for the included attributes (although these will be the most important ones).

2. The abstract could be more informative, including most important conclusions on the most important determinants of patient preference. Similar to my first point: Results section of the abstract mainly gives the conclusion that patients prefer imiquimod, but in the abstract nothing can be read on the determinants of this patient preference.

3. The attribute levels were presumably chosen to vary in order to be able to tell which aspects of which attributes influence patient choice. For the reader, it would be useful to also be informed on the levels which are considered most realistic for both treatment options.

4. As the authors describe, many respondents had difficulty in answering the questions. Did the authors consider to include a dominant choice set to test for rationality (i.e., a choice set which includes one treatment profile characterised by
logically preferable levels on all attributes)?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests